

Haaretz embraces Trump, Arendt and the one-state solution

Von Dr. phil. Clemens henl, 17. Februar 2017

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In an article in Haaretz, February 16, 2017, Chemi Shalev invokes Hannah Arendt and her bestselling study "Origins of Totalitarianism." Arendt introduced the highly problematic concept of "totalitarianism" in 1951, an extremely unhelpful concept, today dedicated to equate left and right, Nazis and Communists. Shalev shares her equation of right and left:

"To create the 'artificially fabricated insanity' on which they depend, the Nazis produced hatred of Jews, and the Communists enemies of the people, creating common ground for isolated individuals and giving them a new, unifying 'self-definition.'"

As all know in Israel, Arendt was among the worst commentators on the Eichmann trial. In Germany, this is among the reasons, people like her so much, by the way.

Most importantly for us today is Arendt's obsessive anti-Zionism as early as in the mid-1940s. Her article "Zionism reconsidered" from 1945 was a blast to the political Zionist movement, just months after the Shoah ended.

Among the worst things, a scholar can do, is comparing her to Critical Theory, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse etc. (I never understood why my colleague Lars Rensmann, also a political scientist, embraces the analogy or relationship of Arendt and Critical Theory, although we know that both detested each

other, Critical Theory Arendt and Arendt Critical Theory, for many reasons. However, it is highly fashionable topic in academia, to be sure, regardless if it is relevant or not.)

Critical Theory was Marxist and pro-Israel, despite the difficulties Horkheimer had with the Jewish STATE.

Arendt, though, was against political Zionism, she favored a “binational” solution. Like Trump!

Trump just said two days ago at the press conference with Netanyahu in the White House, he is fine with a “two-state solution OR a one-state solution.”

Shockingly, Haaretz’s Chemi Shalev is in favor of Arendt as a forerunner of Trump in that respect – while using Arendt as a critic of Trump’s mob-elite relationship:

Trump’s most ludicrous moment of the evening, of course, came when he uttered his “one state, two state, whatever” formula, which sounded like a ham-handed effort to fulfill a request from the Prime Minister’s Office not to complicate Netanyahu’s life with his coalition back home. One can understand Trump, for whom words are not cardinal and who can simply deny he ever said them or accuse the media of distorting them, even though they were broadcast on live TV. The rest of the world however, has no choice but to take Trump’s statements seriously, irresponsible as they were because he is, unbelievable as it remains, the president of the United States.

The irony is that talk of a one-state solution can also take one back to Arendt, whose early Zionism developed into ambivalence in her later years. Arendt supported a Jewish “homeland” in Palestine and was a great admirer of the social and cultural achievements of the pre-State Yishuv, which she saw as redesigning the modern Jew. But she also supported a one-state solution, as it is defined today, that is a binational Jewish-Arab state along the lines advocated by

philosopher Martin Buber and Hebrew University president Judah Magnes, and who knows, because he really doesn't care, Donald Trump as well.

Arendt would have been fine with that! Just re-read her "Zionism reconsidered" from 1945. Kurt Blumenfeld was furious about it, like his friend Gershom Scholem. Scholem once was a binational Zionist from the Brith Shalom group in the 1920s and early 1930s, but around 1936 Scholem had become a political Zionist, fighting on the rooftops of Jerusalem with a rifle in his hands, against the Arabs and Muslims who rejected Jews to have their own state.

Arendt never understood that shift of Scholem from cultural Zionism and binationalism to *political Zionism*.

On January 16, 1946, Scholem visited Kurt Blumenfeld at his home in Jerusalem. He gave him a copy of the *Menorah Journal* from fall 1945, with Arendt's "Zionism Reconsidered" in it. Blumenfeld, one must know, was born in 1884 and more than 20 years older than Arendt (born 1906) and what we would call today a "cool" and vibrant person in Weimar Republic's 1920s Zionist and Jewish circles. It was Blumenfeld, who motivated Arendt to deal with antisemitism and with Zionism in the first place, and he made Arendt familiar with cigars etc. Philosopher Hans Jonas wanted Arendt to join him for a talk Blumenfeld gave in Heidelberg in 1926, and at that event, Arendt met Blumenfeld for the first time.

The following day, January 17, 1946, Blumenfeld wrote a letter to his old friend Felix Rosenblüth, who became Israel's first Minister of Justice (he gave himself a Hebrew name, of course, Pinhas Rosen). Blumenfeld was shocked about the tone of Arendt. Her "journalist superficiality" was not news to him, but still remarkable. Her anti-Zionism combined with her arrogance and disrespectful tone towards Zionists, battling for a Jewish state, was too much for Blumenfeld.[i] He broke

with Arendt (but become affiliated with her again, just to get in trouble with her after Arendt's publication on the Eichmann trial).

I dealt with Arendt and her political father, Kurt Blumenfeld, and the way Blumenfeld criticized her in 1946 in my book about "Critical Theory and Israel" (in German), as well as the pro-Israel stance of Critical Theorists Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Leo Löwenthal. Erich Fromm, though, also an early member of the Horkheimer circle of Critical Theorists in the 1930s, became an ardent anti-Zionist.

It is a truly bad idea to invoke Arendt and to promote Trump's indifference towards Israel as a Jewish state – and his flirt, with a binational, non-Jewish state, the one-state solution. It is shocking that an American President publicly mentions the option of a "one-state solution." That is anti-Zionism, whether from the left, who embraces the end of the Jewish state, or the right, who wants a one-state with no rights for the new Palestinian citizens.

The extreme right and the extreme left with join Chemi Shalev in his obsession with Arendt (Judith Butler is a long-time fan of Arendt, as is her friend Seyla Benhabib, I deal with that in my study on Critical Theory and Israel).

The one-state solution is anti-Zionist. As shown, even close allies of Arendt like her political father Kurt Blumenfeld, were shocked about her tone and anti-Zionist ideology in 1945/46.

Trump is a huge threat to Jews in America and to Israel. He made a soft-core denial of the Shoah on January 27, 2017, he rejects questions about rising antisemitic attacks on synagogues in America, he employs neo-Nazi allies such as Steve Bannon, and he invoked conspiracy myths every single day, and repeats lies, lies, lies.

To embrace Trumps one-state flirt and to compare him to Arendt

is not an "irony," as Haaretz' Chemi Shalev believes. It is anti-Zionist ideology.

What we need is criticism of racism in Israel, of the religious fanatics, the settler movement, and the possibility of an annexation of the Westbank. That would result in the end of the Zionist dream and the Jewish state.

Israel is a Jewish and democratic state. Trump will never learn that lesson, Arendt never tried to really learn it.

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[i] The letter from Kurt Blumenfeld to Felix Rosenblüth from January 17, 1946, reads like follows: „Gestern abend war Gerhard Scholem bei mir mit der Herbstnummer des Menorah Journal. Bei dieser Gelegenheit lernte ich Hannahs Artikel ‚Zionism Reconsidered‘ kennen. Da ich leicht dazu neige, in meiner Kritik über das Ziel zu schießen, wartete ich Scholems Meinung ab. Sie war noch schärfer und geringschätziger. (...) Ich bedaure meinen Brief an Hannah.[i] Nicht etwa, weil dieser Artikel ein unerträgliches Mischmasch einer in diesen Dingen Halbgebildeten ist, sondern weil sich dort Charakterzüge enthüllen, die mich schon einmal veranlaßt haben, meine Beziehungen zu Hannah abubrechen. Dieses Mal kommt alles noch deutlicher und unschöner zum Ausdruck. Daß sie uns Sektierer nennt, ist mir unwichtig. Die Ignoranz in zionistischen Dingen (wobei ich nicht nur an die Bemerkung über ‚General Zionists‘ denke, die einem ernststen Forscher nicht passieren dürfen), überrascht mich auch nicht, da ich Hannahs journalistische Oberflächlichkeit und Voreiligkeit zur Genüge kenne. Furchtbar ist die Minderwertigkeit, die sich in ihren menschlichen Bewertungen manifestiert. Ein völlig unbeteiligter, herzloser Mensch, der über eine Chuzpe verfügt, zu der er nicht das geringste Recht hat, schreibt hier über unter schwersten Bedingungen sich entwickelndes Leben, über das sie sich durch Hörensagen verschnörkelte Begriffe gebildet hat. (...) Der Artikel im Menorah Journal enthüllt für mich sehr stark eine

psychopathische Seite in Hannahs Wesen. Es ist ein bis zum Aberwitz übersteigertes Ressentiment zu fühlen; die sonderbare, mit Heftigkeit geführte Kontroverse, ob Judenhaß dauern oder verschwinden wird, ist dafür besonders bezeichnend. Für Hannahs menschliche Situation, nicht nur für ihre politische, ist es notwendig, das Verschwinden des Antisemitismus zu prognostizieren. Im zionistischen Bewußtsein Palästinas spielt übrigens der Judenhaß im Galuth keine entscheidende Rolle. (...) Ich würde sogar Hannahs Antizionismus noch mit Gelassenheit hinnehmen, wenn ich über die Gehässigkeit und Gemeinheit der Darstellung hinwegkommen könnte. Ich kann es nicht.“ (Kurt Blumenfeld (1976): Im Kampf um den Zionismus. Briefe aus fünf Jahrzehnten. Herausgegeben von Miriam Sambursky und Jochanan Ginat, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 197–98).

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